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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001329

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, INR/AF

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PU](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: SENEGAL: OPPOSITION LEADER CLAIMS BISSAU-GUINEA
DESERTERS JOIN MFDC REBELS IN CASAMANCE

REF: DAKAR 01261

Classified By: Ambassador Marcia S. Bernicat for reasons 1.5 B/D.

11. (C) Summary: On October 9, Abdoulaye Bathily, secretary general of the opposition Democratic League/Movement for the Labor Party (LD/MPT), solicited a meeting with Political Counselor to express his concern about recent events in Senegal's Casamance region. Bathily informed PolCouns that, according to information gathered by his party members in the region, Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) rebels are in the process of rearming and a significant portion of the weapons are arriving from Guinea Bissau. Moreover, members of the Bissau-Guinean armed forces involved in the March assassinations of the president and armed forces chief of staff in Guinea-Bissau, have deserted the Bissau-Guinean armed forces, with their arms, and taken refuge in the MFDC's camps along the border with Senegal and in Casamance, apparently out of fear of prosecution that will ostensibly follow the ongoing investigation into the assassinations. Bathily also claimed that narcotics traffickers have entered into agreements with MFDC fighters for smuggling purposes and that this is a source of funding in the rearmament process. When asked by the Ambassador, Senegalese Foreign Affairs Minister Madicke Niang and MOF Chief of Staff Mankeur Ndiaye denied that there was any Bissau-Guinean involvement in the recent upturn in violence, insisting that the GOGB was taking every appropriate measure to combat the MFDC. End summary.

The Conflict May Escalate

12. (C) Bathily told PolCouns that he decided to contact the US Embassy out of concern for a potential escalation in the conflict. He said he had shared this information with a very limited number of opposition leaders. However, he had no intention of sharing this information with the GOS, given what he believes to be President Abdoulaye Wade's feckless handling of the Casamance conflict. Bathily said that it was his concern regarding an escalation of the conflict, combined with the emergence of narcotics trafficking, that led him to share with the Embassy his information. In his view and based on information he has received from his party members in the Casamance, the nature of the conflict is changing; rebels will attack soldiers of the Senegalese army rather than simply target civilians for robberies, as recently witnessed (reftel).

13. (C) Bathily corroborated reports that recent attacks against the armed forces were carried out by young dissidents in the southern faction of the MFDC. As a result, he claimed that the MFDC faction of Salif Sadio,

the most hard-line MFDC rebel chief, is now taking steps to become more active than previously. Allegedly, Sadio, who is supported by Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, is loath to allow initiative to shift to the MFDC faction(s) in the southern Casamance. (Note: President Jammeh has recently called for a cease-fire in the Casamance. End note.) Bathily alleged that the Senegalese army has poor intelligence and lacks both the resources and manpower to wage a serious counterinsurgency campaign in Casamance. He was dismissive of President Wade's past efforts to buy off and divide and conquer the rebels, arguing that this strategy had merely set the stage for current events. (Comment: According to some reports, younger rebels were either tired of not getting their share of the &buy-off8 money or believe their senior leaders have sold out to Wade. End Comment)

Drug traffickers Cut a Deal with Rebels

¶4. (C) Bathily insisted that narcotics traffickers have established some kind of agreement with MFDC rebels. He believes that these agreements have enabled MFDC rebels to acquire new weaponry and perhaps cash. The danger, in his view, is that traffickers will use the waterways in the Casamance as smuggling routes. The trafficking may extend to the Saloum delta midway along the Senegalese coast and just north of the Gambia. He urged the United States, in its efforts to fight transnational crime, to pay attention to this evolution and also push President Wade to make finding a resolution of the Casamance conflict a priority.

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GOS Skeptical (or Not Aware) of Bissau-Guinea Presence

¶5. (C) On October 19, Ambassador Bernicat met with newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Niang and discussed, inter alia, the Casamance conflict. Asked about the possible of involvement of MFDC rebels, the Minister and his Chief of Staff Ndiaye expressed skepticism but were non-committal with Ndiaye saying, "We do not have any information on that." However, both insisted that the GOGB (contrary to earlier reports) is cooperating with regard to the MFDC and is taking appropriate measures to contain the rebels.

¶6. (C) When Army Attache queried Senegalese interlocutors about the possibility of the presence of Bissau-Guinean deserters taking up arms with the MFDC to escape prosecution for the March assassinations, they dismissed the notion out of hand, noting that the unit of newly confirmed Bissau-Guinean Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Antonio Injai was responsible for the assassination of former President Vieira. Therefore, it is unlikely that Bissau-Guinean soldiers involved in Vieira's assassination would have anything to fear. (Comment: While it is true that soldiers involved in Vieira's death have no reason at the moment to flee potential prosecution, those suspected of involvement in the killing of former Chief of Staff General Batiste Tagme Na Wai would have every reason to flee, given that Na Wai's nephew and protg, Injai, has already carried out the assassination of Vieira in revenge for his uncle's death and, it is credibly reported, tortured people suspected of involvement in the general's death. Moreover, Bissau-Guinean soldiers of limited means and education would not have many other options if they chose to flee. Finally, it is also possible that some might have familial or other ties to people of the Casamance. End comment.)

¶7. (C) Comment: If it were not such a credible and senior figure making the charge, it would be easy to be dismissive of the possibility of Bissau-Guinean deserters taking up arms with the MFDC. However, Bathily is a former minister under Wade and a senior opposition leader. So, while it is by no means a given that his allegations are accurate, it is a cause for concern and merits further scrutiny. He is

undoubtedly correct that an MFDC alliance or compact with traffickers could easily lead to a significant escalation in violence in the Casamance and fundamentally alter the nature of the conflict. Senegalese military in Casamance say they would be ill-equipped to fight such a threat.

18. (C) Regarding Bathily,s request that the USG push President Wade to resolve the Casamance dispute, Post has proposed to various interlocutors, including President Wade, that the U.S. would be willing to consider providing its expertise in demobilization of MFDC members once an agreement is reached. We have emphasized the newer dangers narcotics trafficking and the instability in Guinea-Bissau pose to this already volatile region. The U.S. Government has invested significantly in the Casamance: USD 1.3 million in FY09 funding will continue USAID efforts to support the peace process, State has provided funding Handicap International to continue its demining efforts and roughly half of the newly-signed USD 540 million MCC Compact will improve roads and irrigation systems to increase food production in the region, to be further augmented by President Obama,s Food Security Initiative. Escalating fighting threatens to undermine all of these initiatives.
BERNICAT